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INCOMING TELEGRAM

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ACTION ARA-16

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5292
INFO USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MEXICO IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 SAN SALVADOR 6416

ROME FOR VATICAN OFFICE

E. O. 12065: GDS 8/26/87 (HALLMAN, WILLIAM H.) OR-P
TAGS: PINS, PINT, ES
SUBJ: HUNGER STRIKE AT SALVADORAN PRISONS

1. (C-ENTIRE TEXT.)

2. SUMMARY: BEGINNING ON 8/22 A COORDINATED MOVEMENT GREW AMONG POLITICAL PRISONERS AT THREE LOCATIONS (SANTA TECLA, MARIONA AND THE WOMEN'S PRISON) TO STAGE A HUNGER STRIKE, WHICH WAS ANNOUNCED TO THE WORLD AT A PRESS CONFERENCE CALLED TUESDAY, 8/25 BY THE SALVADORAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. A NUMBER OF REASONS WERE CITED FOR THE ACTION INCLUDING HARASSMENT OF AND THREATS AGAINST PRISONERS' FAMILIES. ACCORDING TO THE SALVADORAN DIRECTOR OF PRISONS NOT ALL PRISONERS ARE TAKING PART, AND THOSE WHO ARE TAKING SOME KIND OF NOURISHMENT (MILK, HONEY, CANDIES) FROM FOOD SUPPLIES BROUGHT BY FAMILIES, OR FROM OTHER SOURCES. IN A GENERALLY TRAGIC NATIONAL PICTURE, PRISON CONDITIONS HERE ARE ACTUALLY GOOD. THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS VISITS REGULARLY. AN EMBASSY OFFICER RECENTLY VISITED ALL THREE AFFECTED PRISON LOCATIONS, WHERE HE FOUND COMPLAINTS DIRECTED AT THE LEGAL LIMBO IN WHICH THESE PRISONERS FIND THEMSELVES, ACCOUNTS OF CRUEL TREATMENT AT PLACES OF INTERROGATION BEFORE ARRIVING AT PRISON, AS WELL AS APPARENTLY GENUINE CONCERN AMONG THE PRISON # RYSAOSANTA TECLA ABOUT THEIR "TARGETTED FAMILIES." COMPLAINTS ABOUT ACTUAL PRISON CONDITIONS #
MUTED AND ROUTINE. END SUMMARY.

3. HUNGER STRIKE ANNOUNCED. WE HEARD LATE AUGUST 25 THAT A HUNGER STRIKE OF SALVADORAN POLITICAL PRISONERS HAD BEEN ANNOUNCED AT A PRESS CONFERENCE EARLIER IN THE DAY HASTILY CALLED BY THE "HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF EL SALVADOR."

ALTHOUGH IT WAS THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION THAT CALLED THE CONFERENCE ONE REPORTER TOLD US THAT THE TWELVE PRINCIPAL SALVADORAN PARTICIPANTS WERE MEMBERS OF THE "COMMITTEE OF MOTHERS AND FAMILIES OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND DISAPPEARED PEOPLE OF EL SALVADOR." ABOUT SIX OTHER SALVADORANS WERE IN THE ROOM AT THE TIME OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE, BUT THEY DID NOT IDENTIFY THEMSELVES. THEY COULD EITHER HAVE BEEN FROM THE "COMMISSION" OR FROM THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY (SOCORRO

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JURIDICO) CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE ARCHBISHOPRIC BUT UNDER NO HIERARCHICAL SUPERVISON-- OR WITH BOTH, SINCE THE "COMMISSION" OR FROM THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY (SOCORRO JURIDICO) CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE ARCHBISHOPRIC BUT UNDER NO HIERARCHICAL SUPERVISION--OR WITH BOTH, SINCE THE COMMISSION OCCUPIES OFFICES WITH "SOCORRO JURIDICO" AND THE TWO GROUPS ARE VIRTUALLY INDISTINGUISHABLE.

4. REASONS FOR THE STRIKE WERE VARIOUSLY DESCRIBED. ONE ANNOUNCED REASON WAS THREAT OF ABDUCTIONS OF FAMILY MEMBERS AFTER VISITING POLITICAL PRISONERS. IN THIS CONNECTION SPECIFIC MENTION WAS MADE OF A THREAT THE "FAMILIES GROUP" BELIEVE IS RELATED, MADE PUBLIC BY "DIARIO DE HOY" ON AUGUST 14. THE NEWS ITEM REPORTED A TELEPHONE CALL FROM SOMEONE ALLEGING TO BE THE "FIRST COMMANDER" OF THE "MAXIMILIAN H. MARTINEZ BRIGADE" (A "DEATH SQUAD" DESIGNATION THAT CROPS UP HERE FROM TIME TO TIME, MOST RECENTLY IN THE "SUMMARY JUSTICE" MURDERS OF TWO CLOWNS AND EIGHT OTHER FAIR WORKERS IN SANTA ANA), WHO TOLD "DIARIO" THAT HE WANTED TO ADVISE THE "MOTHERS OF PRISONERS" COMMITTEE TO STOP PUBLISHING NOTICES IN THE NEWSPAPERS ABOUT THEIR PRISONER RELATIVES OR FACE "REPRISALS."

NOTE BY OC/T: SAN SALVADOR (SECTION 1). GARBLES IN PARA 2. CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [illegible] DATE 8 JUL 1982
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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5. (COMMENT: AN EMBASSY OFFICER VISITED SANTA TECLA PRISON ON AUGUST 13 AND TALKED WITH SEVEN PRISONERS THERE WHO EXPRESSED APPARENTLY GENUINE FEAR FOR THEIR RELATIVES WHO ARE ALLOWED TO VISIT ON THURSDAYS AND SUNDAYS. THEY CLAIMED THAT "SEVERAL" HAD DISAPPEARED AFTER HAVING THEIR NAMES REGISTERED WITH NATIONAL POLICE OFFICERS WHO FORM A CHECKPOINT BEFORE THE DOOR OF THE PRISON, WHICH IS IN ADDITION TO THE USUAL PRISON CHECKS OF NAMES AND PARCELS INSIDE THE DOOR OF THE PRISON, AND HANDED EMBOFF A LIST OF 13 CLAIMED DIRECT OR RELATED INCIDENTS

6. ANOTHER REPORTER SAID THAT CONCERN OVER "VIOLENCE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE" WAS CITED FOR THE STRIKE, PARTICULARLY THE DECAPITATIONS (THE PRESS HAS REPORTED SIXTY DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS) MOST RECENTLY REPORTED FROM SANTA ANA AND SONSONATE PROVINCES. TWO HANDOUTS AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE, HOWEVER, PREPARED ON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION LETTERHEAD COMPLAINED ABOUT TWO, RELATIVELY MINOR SETS OF CONCERNS. THE FIRST COMPLAINT WAS ABOUT CONDITIONS OF "POLITICALS" AT THE WOMEN'S PRISON AND HOW THEY HAD BEEN DENIED THE RIGHT TO PIN UP A "WALL NEWSPAPER" (COMMENT: A DISPUTE WHICH LED TO SLOGAN PAINTINGS ON SEVERAL WALLS INCLUDING THE CHAPEL AND A FIFTEEN DAY SUSPENSION OF THE PRIVILEGE OF RECEIVING VISITORS). THE SECOND HANDOUT DEALT WITH REQUESTS BY SANTA TECLA PRISONERS FOR A HIGHER FOOD ALLOWANCE, (COMMENT: THE PRISONERS ARE ALLOWED A GRANT OF 1.25 COLONES PER DAY, WITH WHICH THEY BUY THEIR OWN FOOD AND PREPARE IT THEMSELVES), UNINTERRUPTED THURSDAY-SUNDAY VISITING HOURS, BETTER MEDICAL CARE, MACHINERY TO PERMIT SELF EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THE PRISON SO THAT PRISONERS COULD SUPPORT THEIR FAMILIES, PROVISION OF CLEANING MATERIALS ETC. THE STATEMENT ALSO DEMANDED THAT POLITICAL PRISONSERS AT OTHER LOCATIONS BE TRANSFERRED TO SANTA TECLA TO FILL IT UP TO ITS CAPACITY TO HOLD 140 MEN

7. "RADIO VENCEREMOS", IN A 1200 GMT AUGUST 25 BROADCAST MONITORED BY FBIS ADDED NEW REASONS FOR THE STRIKE, AMONG THEM "TO REPUDIATE THE DAILY VIOLATIONS OF THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS BY THE DICTATORSHIP NOT ONLY THROUGH REPRESSION BUT ALSO WITH THREATS TO THEIR LIVES AND THOSE OF THEIR RELATIVES." ALSO THEY " REPUDIATE THE ILLEGAL DELAYS IN COURT PROCEEDINGS." ACCORDING TO VENCEREMOS THEY WILL CONTINUE THIS "TO THE DEATH."

[redacted] THE RADIO VENCEREMOS PIECE SAYS THAT THE "MOTHERS AND RELATIVES" COMMITTEE EXPRESSES SOLIDARITY WITH THE HUNGER STRIKES AND "BLAMES THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC-MILITARY JUNTA, PUPPET OF U.S. IMPERIALISM, FOR THE INHUMAN TREATMENT OF THEM" SEIZING THE OCCASION, VENCEREMOS CONTINUES WITH AN ELEVEN-POINT LIST OF DEMANDS BY THE "POLITICAL PRISONSERS OF EL SALVADOR."

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10. MARIONA. OF 170 "POLITICALS" 57 ARE EATING NORMALLY DURING A STRIKE THAT TOOK SHAPE 8/24. THE OTHER PRISONERS ARE RELYING ON FOOD STASHED AWAY FROM THURSDAY-SUNDAY FAMILY VISITS.

11. WOMEN'S CORRECTIONAL FACILITY. PRISONERS HAVE REFUSED PRISON FOOD SINCE SUNDAY 8/23 BUT APPARENTLY ARE EATING SPARTAN RATIONS FROM FOOD SUPPLIES BROUGHT IN DURING FAMILY VISITS, AS IS THE CASE AT MARIONA.

12. EMBASSY COMMENT: AN EMBASSY OFFICER VISITED THE THREE AFFECTED PRISONS ON AUGUST 13 AND AUGUST 19, ALONG WITH PRISONS DIRECTOR PAREDES. CONDITIONS VARY WIDELY BUT ESSENTIALLY ARE WHOLESOME AND HUMANE.. MARIONA APPEARED TO HAVE THE HARDEST CONDITIONS, PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE OF CROWDING. AT SANTA TECLA, WHERE PRISONERS MAKE NO EFFORT TO HIDE THEIR MILITANCE, EMBOFF WAS UNABLE TO GO INTO THE CELL BLOCK, BUT THE COMPLAINTS HE HEARD FROM PRISONER REPRESENTATIVES DEALT WITH CRUEL TREATMENT BEFORE ARRIVING AT CONFINEMENT AT SANTA TECLA (DURING INTERROGATION AT ONE OF THE SECURITY SERVICES) HARASSMENT OF FAMILY MEMBERS AND THREATS AGAINS THEM OR EVEN THEIR MURDERS AFTER VISITING SANTA TECLA, HARASSMENT OF PRISONERS INSIDE THE PRISON BY NATIONAL POLICEMEN, WHO HAVE THEIR BARRACKS NEXT DOOR AND HAVE ON OCCASION STAGED RAIDS INTO SANTA TECLA FOLLOWED BY CLOSE BODY SEARCHES, PLUS A VARIETY OF LESS DRAMATIC COMPLAINTS PROBABLY HEARD IN EVERY SUCH INSTITUTION IN THE WORLD.

13. THE WOMEN'S PRISON WAS NO "MOTEL," BUT ITS PAVILIONS ARE SPACIOUS AND CLEAN, AND POLITICAL PRISONERS, ALTHOUGH ISOLATED FROM THE OTHERS (INPART FOR THEIR PROTECTION, FOR OCCASIONALLY FAMILIES HEAR DEATH THREATS AGAINST THEIR PRISONER RELATIVES PRESUMABLY FROM RIGHT WING GROUPS) ARE ALLOWED THE USUAL VISITATION PRIVILEGES, SPORTS PARTICIPATION, CHURCH ATTENDANCE ETC. THE PRISONS DIRECTOR JUSTIFIED HAVING FORBIDDEN THE "NEWSPAPER WALL" BECAUSE IT HAD BECOME A MERE COLLECTION OF REVOLUTIONARY SLOGANS, HE JUSTIFIED HAVING WITHDRAWN VISITING PRIVILEGES ONLY AFTER THE INCIDENT OF THE PAINTED SLOGANS.

14. IT WOULD BE HARD TO PREDICT WHERE THIS "HUNGER STRIKE" WILL END, BUT WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF A HANDFUL OF PRISONERS WHO MAY HOLD OUT LONGER IT SEEMS EXPECTABLE THAT THE STRIKE WILL BE ABANDONED AS SOON AS MAXIMUM PUBLICITY IS OBTAINED.

15. NOTE: THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS REGULARLY VISITS THESE FACILITIES.
HINTON